DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 181 727 FL 010 886

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TITLE Language Attitudes in a Ukrainian-American Community.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Bilingualism; Cultural Background; Cultural Factors; *English (Second Language); *Ethnic Groups; *Ethnicity; Ethnic Studies; Instructional Programs; *Language Attitudes; *Language Dominance; Language Research; Language Role; Language Usage; Questionnaires; Religious Factors; *Sociocultural Patterns; Sociolinguistics

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the language attitudes of bilingual children and teenagers in the Ukrainian-American community in Buffalo, New York. It was hypothesized that Ukranian-American children develop an ethnic consciousness and pride in preserving the Ukranian language and culture, but at the same time, show no increase in the use of Ukrainian and favor English in everyday interaction. To get a better understanding of the Ukrainian-American Community and the attitudes of first generation Ukrainian-American children who favor the use of English over Ukrainian, a detailed community profile was made, and a language background and attitude questionnaire was administered. The results of the language background questionnaire showed that the children favor the use of the English language and slightly reject Ukrainian. However, the language attitude questionnaire suggested that they have an unexpected loyalty to their nationality, ethnic pride, and a strong desire to preserve their Ukrainian identity, culture, and language. The Ukrainian parents in Buffalo today express a strong desire to maintain and keep the Ukrainian language among their children. The future of the Ukrainian language depends on the attitudes of these children. (Author/AMH)

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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN A UKRAINIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY*

by

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Introduction. The purpose of this research was to examine the language attitudes of first-generation Ukrainian-American children and teenagers in the city of Buffalo, New York. Since I had spent much more time with the teenagers rather than with the children (at the Ukrainian American Youth Association) at the time of this investigation, I decided to focus my attention mainly on their responses to the prepared Language Attitude Questionnaires.

I had hypothesized that Ukrainian-American teenagers develop an ethnic consciousness and pride in preserving the Ukrainian language and culture, but at the same time show no increase in the use of Ukrainian and favor English in everyday interaction.

In order to get a better understanding of the bilingual Ukrainian-American Community in Buffalo, I first did a detailed community profile which helped me greatly in the selection of subjects, preparation of tests, instruments and attitude stimuli.

The Community Profile. A community profile provides information on the demography, occupational distribution, and socio-political structure of a community. Included in a community profile are data on education, religious organization, intergroup relations, residential composition, communications media and leadership. (Wolck, 1972)

Adopted Role in the Community. As a member of the Ukrainian-American Community in Buffalo, New York, and fluent in both English and Ukrainian, I did not encounter any difficulties when inquiring or asking questions from other members of the community. In fact, since there are no concrete statistics or census tracts on Ukrainians in Buffalo, most of the information I had acquired was from my parish priest and two former Ukrainian teachers from St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic School.

Demography and Statistics. Buffalo is a very ethnic city in which the Ukrainians represent a small minority group. The Ukrainians here are very "close-knit" and nationalistic. They have established their own churches, schools, cultural centers, social organizations, credit unions, stores, etc.

The first settlement of Ukrainians in Buffalo dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century. Old documents and newspapers show that Mychajlo Kotelesh and Olga Oliar settled in the northern

*This is a condensed and updated version of a paper read at the University-wide Student Conference on Communicative Behavior: Approaches and Research, Buffalo, New York, March 8-10, 1979.

part of Buffalo, generally referred to as "Black Rock", in 1882. In 1907, they constructed their first Ukrainian Catholic Church, naming it St. John the Baptist. This church still stands today and serves a community of 884 Ukrainian Catholics.*

The second settlement of Ukrainians developed on Buffalo's east side in the Clinton-Fillmore-Oneida area. Here, too, the Ukrainians built their church in 1919, naming it St. Nocholas Ukrainian Catholic Church. In 1960, they built a chapel (St. Mary's Chapel) with an adjunct parish school (St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic School). St. Nicholas serves a community of 1,610 parishioners.* In Buffalo's suburb of Cheektowaga, there is a Ukrainian-Orthodox church with 562 parishioners.*

The majority of Buffalo's Ukrainian-American community still make their living in steel mills (Bethlehem Steel), and the automobile industry (Ford and Chevrolet), but many also work in flour mills, textile and chemical companies, and meat packing companies.

The Church. Along with their culture, traditions, and values, the Ukrainians brought with them their tradition of a parish church. The church served as a recreational center and provided Ukrainian language education for the children of the immigrants. It provided the parishioner with spiritual guidance as well as a social outlet. The church was, and still is, the main factor and dominating force in molding the life of the Ukrainian community. Ukrainians have established their own "national" churches - The Ukrainian Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. More than half (about 55%) of the Ukrainians in Buffalo are Ukrainian-Catholics and 40% are Ukrainian Orthodox, while a small portion belong to the Roman Catholic, Baptist or Protestant churches. Religious holidays are highly treasured and respected among community members because they signify the fact that their "fellow-countrymen" in Soviet Ukraine are prohibited from celebrating them as they do here.

Education. The Ukrainian Community in Buffalo supports an all-day parish school and a "Weekend School". The all-day parish school has a program of studies in Ukrainian literature, history and language, in addition to the academic subjects taught in English. The Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate have been serving the parish school since 1941.

The "Ukrainian Weekend School" teaches ethnic subjects such as history, geography, literture, grammar and religion from four to six hours on Saturdays.

There is also a kindergarten conducted at the same time as the day school, where the children are taught by a native Ukrainian teacher, using only Ukrainian as the language of instruction.

Social, Cultural and Political Organizations. In addition to constructing churches, Ukrainians were also interested in forming organizations and associations. The ultimate goal of the associations is to maintain the Ukrainian language, and support Ukraine's freedom toward becoming an independent nation with its own government.

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*Statistics obtained through personal interview with the parish priest of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The two largest youth organizations in Buffalo are "SUM" (Spilka Ukrainckoi Molodi), the Ukrainian American Youth Association, and "Plast". "Plast" is a scout-type organization whose goals are to socialize its youth into a nationalistic spirit. "SUM"is a political organization which places primary emphasis on political activism and ideology. Both organizations conduct cultural-educational activities, summer camps, sports rallies and political demonstrations for Ukraine's national self-determination. "SUM"is an integral part of the "Freedom Front" or "Liberation Front" as it is sometimes called. The "Liberation Front" is comprised of youths, veterans, and women's organizations which takes on a national-political character in disseminating news about present Ukraine and the Russification policy being forced on its people.

There are well over 50 political, social, cultural and student organizations today in Buffalo. Some of the other popular organizations are: The Ukrainian National Association (U.N.A.), The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), Soyuz Ukrainok Ameryky (Ukrainian Women's Organization), Soyoz Ukrainskych Studentskych Tovarystv Ameryky (SUSTA), a student organization encompassing all other student groups, etc.

Media. There is a Ukrainian radio program in Buffalo broadcast daily from Station WHLD in Niagara Falls, New York. It features news, editorials, music, and carries a large amount of advertising from the local Ukrainian and Canadian merchants.

The oldest and most influential newspaper read by Ukrainians in Buffalo is SVOBODA, which means "liberty". Many Ukrainians also subscribe to HOMIN UKRAINY-UKRAINIAN WEEKLY, Shliakh (The Way) and UKRAINSKE NARODNE SLOVO - The Ukrainian National Word, as well as magazines and youth periodicals which their children read. Some of the popular children's magazines are: Hotuis (Be Ready), Krylati (The Winged Ones) and Veselka (The Rainbow).

Method

Subjects. All twelve subjects used in this pilot study were first-generation Ukrainian-Americans, who had been born and raised in Buffalo, New York. All subjects were members of St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic church and had attained their elementary school education at the parish school. Their ages ranged from thirteen to nineteen years. They came from working class and lower-middle-class family backgrounds. Six of the subjects were male, and six were female. Eleven of the subjects were enrolled in public high schools throughout the City of Buffalo and the neighboring suburbs, and one subject was in his first semester of college. During the time of the investigation, many of the subjects were attending the "Ukrainian Weekend School". These subjects were also active members of the Ukrainian American Youth Association in Buffalo, New York, and participated in all cultural, political, and civic functions sponsored by the organization.

Materials. Three complementary measures were used to assess the language attitudes of the subjects. The first measure was a Language Background Questionnaire, which consisted of 43 questions, of which 39 were multiple choice. The main objective of the Language Background Questionnaire was to use it as a reliable instrument for measuring the extent of bilingual background to which an individual is exposed quantitatively, and the importance attributed to both languages.

The second measure administered was a Language Attitude Questionnaire in the form of a rating scale, which consisted of 10 statements. The intensity of each response would be reflected in whether the subjects strongly agree, agree, are undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. Half of the questions were favorably worded, and the other half unfavorably. The subjects would have the opportunity to agree or disagree with each question, thus indicating their attitude and expressing their thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

As a complementary measure, the third instrument used was the one that seemed to show the most emotional, attitudinal and opinionated responses, namely, the subjects' own written responses to an attitude question. The main objective here was to get their most honest reactions by asking a question, which was not a "heavy" or loaded stimulus, and see whether their reactions toward language and culture would show up. Therefore, the question asked could not sound racial, ambiguous, or for that matter, ethnic. (See appendix)

Testing Procedure. The Language Background and Attitude Questionnaires were administered at two of our regular Ukrainian-American Youth Association meetings. Meetings were generally held Friday evenings from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Ukrainian Home "DNIPRO" at 562 Genesee Street in Buffalo, New York. The first week, the Language Background Questionnaire was administered and the subjects answered it within ten minutes. The Attitude Rating Scale and "stimulus question" were administered a week later. The subjects seemed to have no difficulties in following directions nor in answering the "stimulus question" which took them approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. The questionnaires were handed out to the subjects, who were sitting around a table; the investigator explained the procedure, and then simply left the room.

Method of Data Analysis. A variety of formal and informal data analyses were used. Since there were only 12 subjects used in this pilot study, there seemed to have been no need to use computed statistics or standard deviations. Instead, each of the students' responses to the language questionnaires was analyzed item by item, to see how many of the subjects answered the same way, demonstrating a similar attitude toward both languages. Another reason for this step by step analysis was to see if their responses followed a set pattern. Since the sample was much too small to calculate statistical results, percentages were used to compare their responses. Hence, if a significant percentage responded in the same way (70%-100%) I looked for the correlations. As a result of this scoring system, the higher or greater a number of responses to a certain item in the Language Background Questionnaire, for example, the more that person had a favorable attitude toward the use of one of the languages. Conversely, a fewer number indicated an unfavorable attitude. When the totals were converted to percentages, the closer they were to 100%, the more favorable they were toward English or Ukrainian. Responses around 50% indicated that the subjects were equally disposed toward both languages. Responses to the Language Attitude-Rating Scale were conducted in the same way as for the questionnaire. However, the "stimulus question" asked was in the form of an essay question. The subjects were asked to write a paragraph expressing their feelings, emotions, and opinions to a certain question. (See appendix)

Results.

Results of the Language Background Questionnaire:

For the purpose of finding out the interrelationships between groups of questions, I divided the questions of the Language Background Questionnaire into the following groups: Group I comprised all the items from questions 1-6; Group II questions 7-8; Group III questions 9-12; Group IV questions 13-15; Group V questions 16-21; Group VI questions 21-23; Group VII questions 24-26; Group VIII questions 27-28; Group IX questions 29-32; Group X questions 33-36; Group XI questions 37-40; and Group XII questions 41-42.

Inspecting the results that the groups revealed, there were very few cases, if any, where the divergence was more than one category. In general, the subjects frequently had the same answers. It seems that the items asked were reliable. The language of inverview used throughout the study was English.

1. Group I, questions 1-6 were all the same. All the subjects are native born Americans, having lived in the United States all their lives, and have never lived in a Ukrainian-speaking country or any foreign country, for that matter.

2. Group II, questions 7-8. Ukrainian is the dominant language of their parents and relatives. All of the subjects said that all or some of their relatives spoke Ukrainian, and 80 percent said that some of their relatives spoke English.

3. Group III, questions 9-12. Both Ukrainian and English are used in the home. The responses were 100 percent the same from the subjects. But they all feel that they use more English than Ukrainian

at home. But the responses to which language they are using more as compared to a year ago were 50-50. Half of the subjects felt they were using more Ukrainian and the other half felt they were using more English. All of the subjects agree that they still speak the language they learned as a baby.

4. Group IV, questions 13-15. The subjects definitely use much more English than Ukrainian. 90 percent feel that they use English or a little more English with their friends at school. Only 10 percent said they use both Ukrainian and English. Only one subject felt that he was using more Ukrainian this year as compared to last year.

5. Group V, questions 16-20. All the subjects have books at home and own between 10-100 books. The average amount of books they read in Ukrainian was 5, while in English it was 16.5 books. Only 20 percent read any in a different foreign language.

6. Group VI, questions 21-23. The average amount of time they spent at Ukrainian movies was 2.5 times a year. They went to English movies 16.5 times a year. 40 percent said they watched different foreign language movies besides English or Ukrainian.

7. Group VII, questions 24-26. On the average, the results showed that they read Ukrainian magazines and newspapers about one hour a week. The subjects read American newspapers and magazines on the average of 5 hours a week, and they spent no time reading any newspapers or magazines in other foreign languages.

8. Group VIII, questions 27-28. The subjects listened to Ukrainian language radio programs about twice a week on the average, and American language programs more than one hour a day.

9. Group IX, questions 29-32. 80 percent of the informants said they understood Ukrainian fairly well, and 20 percent said very well. As for speaking, they all answered that they spoke Ukrainian fairly well.

10. Group X, questions 33-36. Most of the responses in this category varied in many ways. At home, someone might answer them in another language sometimes or often, but in their neighborhood never. Outside of school, 50 percent said that no one answered them in Ukrainian, while the other 50 percent said that someone did answer them in Ukrainian sometimes or often.

11. Group XI, questions 37-40. The responses showed that sometimes the subjects were in the habit of answering back in Ukrainian at home. In the neighborhood they never did. Out of class, 50 percent replied that they sometimes answered in Ukrainian and the other half said that they never did. While at school, in class, 70 percent said they never answered in Ukrainian, and the others replied that they sometimes did.

12. Group XII, questions 41-42. All the subjects replied that they understood everything written and spoken in English. But in Ukrainian nearly everything. Their responses indicate that they are clearly more positive and sure of the English language.

The results of this language background questionnaire show that the subjects used in this study, i.e. teenagers, are more confident in

English, favor it slightly more than Ukrainian and use it more often than Ukrainian in group interaction. English is the dominant language associated with prestige. English is useful for making contact with the outside world and useful in everyday life.

Ukrainian, on the other hand, is very useful and important to family life; in the home, with relatives and in social-cultural affairs. Ukrainian is used everyday to communicate with family members and maintain a close bond.

Responses to the Language Attitude Rating Scale. The responses for the language attitudes were correlated in the same way as for the language questionnaire; the higher or greater the number of responses to a certain item, the more that subject had a favorable attitude toward Ukrainian or English.

1. All the subjects strongly agreed that Ukrainians are as trustworthy as anyone else. (100 %)

2. All of my informants (100%) strongly disagreed with question number 2 from the attitude rating scale. It did not bother them the way Ukrainians stick to their own language.

3. Their responses were 100% favorable toward going out with their Ukrainian friends.

4. They all strongly agreed that it did not bother them to see their brothers or sisters playing with Ukrainian children. (100%)

5. The statement about working for a Ukrainian employer instilled two different types of responses. 60% of the subjects agreed that they would like to work for a Ukrainian employer and 40% were undecided.

6. There was 100% disagreement with the statement that the informants would move out of the neighborhood if more Ukrainians bought homes there.

7. The responses were positive that it was up to them to preserve Ukrainian for their fathers. (100%)

8. Everyone agreed (100%) that there were more useful languages in the world than Ukrainian.

9. 30% of the subjects agreed that Ukrainian was useful in searching for a career, and 70% disagreed, saying that it was not useful.

10. It appears that it is necessary to know Ukrainian to enjoy oneself at Ukrainian clubs. (100%)

The possible failure of two of these questions, numbers 3 and 4, could have been because of the subjects' confusion with ethnicity and language attitudes. But, since they were evaluating each item on a rating scale, it was hoped to extract as many possible language attitudes.

Intercorrelations Between Groups of Questions from the Language Attitude Questionnaire

1. The responses to questions #1 and 2 support the notion that ethnic

minority teenagers attribute a high degree of positive affective attitudes and values to their own group.

2. Question #2 reflects a general concern of the informants to uphold their language and culture.

3. Questions #3 and 4 indicate that Ukrainians are fun to be with, and that the informants are happy to go out with them. Nationalities obviously bind people together.

4. The subjects' responses to question #5 were somewhat mixed. Perhaps it is better to work for an employer that you do not know. This way, no personal feelings could damage an employer-employee relationship.

5. The subjects' responses to question #6 would indicate a kind of "close-knit" personal satisfaction, living together with many Ukrainians in the same neighborhood. The subjects have positive affective values toward living with other Ukrainians.

6. The subjects' responses to question #7 indicate a sense of ethnic pride and duty to their parents, to Ukraine, and in preserving the Ukrainian language.

7. Questions #8 and 9 show that the Ukrainian language in America is not a sign of prestige in finding work or pursuing a career, but instead, something to be preserved and upheld for tradition and nationalistic satisfaction.

8. The subjects' responses to question #10 show that it is necessary to know Ukrainian if you want to be integrated in a cultural community and learn many things about that community. If one attends gala social events such as weddings, parties, ceremonies, banquets, etc., and Ukrainian is the language used all night, it is difficult to figure out "what's going on" unless you speak the language.

Results of the Third Attitude Stimulus

The stimulus question asked here was in the form of an essay question. I simply asked my subjects to give their reactions to the question "How do you feel about going out on dates with your friends from school?" The purpose of this question was to see if any language attitude responses would show up in their written answers. Their responses proved successful. The answers elicited showed traits of language attitudes, nationalism and ethnic pride and consciousness. The subjects' similar responses were correlated in the following way: personal traits, cultural-behavioral traits (language beliefs, religion), attitudes towards people. The subjects' responses were randomly selected from their answer sheets as follows:

1. Personal Traits

"I go out with them just for fun, because they're from different neighborhoods."
"I get along with them fine."
"It doesn't bother me who I go out with as long as they're nice."
"I like to go out with people from different nationalities."
"I approve of going out with friends from school."

"I feel at ease with my American friends that aren't Ukrainian."
"If I like the person, I'll go out with them."

2. Cultural-Behavioral Traits

"I'd rather go out with Ukrainian friends I know really well, then I wouldn't feel uncomfortable."
"If I do spend a lot of time with my American friends though, I find myself getting sort of bored and wanting to be with people of my own ethnic group, because I know we have more things in common with each other."
"But because they're American, I have to put my language customs aside."
"I often have more to talk about with Ukrainians because we have a common culture."
"But I'd never forget my culture, no matter what. I'm too proud of it."
"I'd rather go out with Ukrainian girls because I'm Ukrainian."
"Americans many times don't understand your strong feelings about your ethnic culture and would not want to accept it."

3. Attitudes Toward People

"I feel the same as I would by going out with my Ukrainian friends."
"I find Ukrainian girls a lot nicer with nicer personalities."

Conclusions on my Research Project

This research was designed to detect any attitudinal bias which Ukrainian-American teenagers might express toward English and Ukrainian. I had hypothesized before that teenagers exhibit many tendencies in rejecting Ukrainian in favor of English , but at the same time, they show ethnic consciousness and pride in many respects towards maintaining the Ukrainian language and culture.

The results of the Language Background questionnaire show that the teenagers tested favor the use of the English language and slightly reject Ukrainian. However, the language attitude rating scale and "stimulus question" exhibit their Ukrainian nationalism and ethnic consciousness, as well as certain traits such as: character traits - positive, neutral and negative feelings, language identity, affective values, nationalism and a strong sense of identification and loyalty towards the Ukrainian language.

Various explanations for their attitudes can be particularly exhibited from the attitude "stimulus question" about dating:

1. Ethnic pride and national consciousness.

2. Wanting to preserve their Ukrainian identity, culture and language.

3. The desire to follow their parents' footsteps and remain members of the Ukrainian community. In relation to the hypothesis, as stated before, the results of the attitude questionnaires suggest that teenagers have an unexpected loyalty to their nationality, ethnic pride and a desire to preserve their Ukrainian identity, culture and language. It appears that their attitudes toward Ukrainian and English as measured from the questionnaires, are reflected in their actual language behavior.

Attitudes are more complex than the ones tested in this research project. This project only dealt with a small facet of the attitudinal make-up of the subjects. When the subjects were left alone after the last questionnaire was administered, they chose to speak in English. This was in spite of the fact that they had just exhibited such a strong sense of loyalty and ethnic consciousness in their responses to the attitude "stimulus question" administered two minutes ago.

Results and Discussion. Attitudes deal with very sensitive issues. If attitude tests ask subjects to attribute negative or positive qualities to members of certain ethnic groups using different rating scales, these subjects may guess this is a test of their ethnic attitudes and, not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings, may therefore give responses that are not valid. It is very difficult to be sure whether the instruments used in this pilot study measure language or ethnic attitudes, or, for that matter, both. The fact is, that since language attitudes and ethnic attitudes are so highly correlated, it is definitely possible that this study could be measuring both at the same time. Because of the complexities and the great number of possibilities in the makeup of a bilingual population, it is necessary to know as much as possible about the nature of the group before examining it. Most important of all is the language behavior of the group being studied.

APPENDIX

The Language Attitude Rating Scale

Directions: Please respond to the following statements as follows: (1) I strongly agree, (2) I disagree, (3) I'm undecided, (4) I agree, (5) I strongly agree.

1. Generally speaking, I believe Ukrainians are as trustworthy as anyone else.
2. It bothers me the way Ukrainians stick to their own language and customs.
3. I am happy to go out on dates with Ukrainian friends.
4. It bothers me to see my brothers and sisters playing with Ukrainian friends.
5. I would be willing to work for a Ukrainian employer.
6. If too many Ukrainians bought homes in my neighborhood I would move out.
7. We owe it to our fathers to preserve Ukrainian.
8. There are more useful languages in the world than Ukrainian.
9. Ukrainian has many advantages when searching for a career.
10. I need to know Ukrainian to enjoy myself at social and church events.

Attitude "stimulus question"

Directions: Please answer the following question in a paragraph or less in your own words.

How do you feel about going out on dates with your friends from school?

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